An Article

—on—

Secret Societies

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The Lodge Committee

of the General Conference of Mennonites
of N. America

Foreword

One of the duties enjoined upon the Lodge Committee elected at the General Conference in Reedley, California, was a campaign of education on Secret Societies through articles in the church papers and occasionally sending speakers into the congregations. By the former method many would not be reached because they do not get a church paper, and the latter is too expensive for the means at our command. For this reason the Committee has decided to send forth this little pamphlet written by one of their number, in the hope that it may shed light on the subject and unite all our congregations on the Anti-lodge platform laid down by the General Conference.

THE COMMITTEE.

Why Mennonites Are Opposed to Secret Societies.

When we say anything about Secret Societies we are immediately challenged with the accusation that we know not whereof we speak, for they say no one knows anything about Secret Societies except those who are members and therefore what we say is guess-work and is prompted by an unjust prejudice. It is a fact that can easily be established that we have two reliable sources of information; viz., The recognized literature of the various organizations, containing their prayers, rituals and teachings that can be bought for much less than it costs to learn them by initiation; and the testimony of seceders who have been brought to see their folly and realized that a spiritually minded person can not consistently remain in the Lodge. They have stepped out and exposed their character and teachings. And in

our experience we have found a third evidence; viz., men who are still inside the Lodge but whose conscience is keen enough to compel them to confess to the truth and refrain from denying it. We are therefore not opposing any individual, for we have no ill feeling against any one, but a system, the character and teachings of an organization which has entangled many in its meshes and is wielding a powerful, and we are persuaded to believe, a detrimental influence over the church and the salvation of souls, and what we say we would be prompted by the spirit of Christ which is the spirit of love.

We are entirely justified in our investigation, for anything that is good will bear scrutiny without fear, and anything that objects to such a process at once arouses suspicion. The Word of God (I John 4:1) admonishes us to try the spirits whether they be of God. This implies at least four thoughts. (1) that we should be cautious and not accept everything as genuine. (2) that all spirits can and should be tested. (3) that some spirits are not of God and (4) that these spirits may seem good and are therefore deceiving. It is therefore not what a man thinks or whether he is unable to see any wrong in it, but how does it stand the Biblical test, and how does it measure up to the Divine standard.

Although Freemasonry, which is the mother and to a great degree, the model of all secrecy, is claimed to be a very ancient order, dating its existence back to the time of Solomon, it is yet an undisputed fact that Freemasonry was born, not in a temple of God,

but in APPLE TREE TAVERN, England, in 1717. But it is true that Secret Societies are ancient. The first one we read of is found in Ez. 8:7-16 and the arrangement of this room and the object of worship is strikingly similar to a Masonic Lodge in session, and which is strongly condemned by God in vs. 17-18. He calls them abominations. Then we have the Elucynian Mysteries of two thousand years ago, also strikingly similar to the modern Lodge, and Paul's warnings against these in Eph. 5:11-13. These are termed unfruitful works of darkness.

THE LODGE A GOOD THING.

But before going further in our discussion of the character of Secrecy let us notice some of their merits, and the things in the lodges which are in their favor, for they must have some merits to stand on, and we are willing to give them their dues. They are:

1. The benefits promised, in case of sickness and death. This is the bait by which many a victim is caught, and we have seen cases where these benefits have greatly relieved suffering and poverty. It is, to say the least a very selfish motive to join the Lodge for what you can get out of it, but we know of a great many nominal Christians who have united with the church for the same reasons, not to put in all they could which is as it should be, but to get out of it all they can. The result will be that they will not get anything out of it, for time or eternity. Men who join the Lodge for gain will more often experience a loss. Who pays the benefits? Surely not the outsider. Who

pays for the loss of time and wages during a strike? Hundreds of secret insurance companies have failed when the members became old and died faster than the money of the new members could supply the funds for their claims, and such as the Modern Woodmen of today are facing the same doom.

2. Lodges are building homes and orphanages and are relieving the suffering of many unfortunates, but it is mostly with money that belongs to the church, for the church is the channel through which charity ought to be dispensed. We know a man who gave $200 in one year to the Lodge and $10 to the church, and who confessed that he was robbing the church and giving his spoil to the Lodge.

3. There are many good men in the Lodge. Many ministers of the Gospel, prominent men in society whose reputation is above reproach, and all of these doing a great deal for the uplifting of mankind and the betterment of society. Many are persuaded to believe that for this reason Lodges must be a good thing. These men are needed in the Lodge for currency, and to get them, many ministers are admitted free, and without the foolish initiations to which the other members are subjected. That ministers are in the Lodge is no proof that it is a good thing. We have heard of ministers being in jail and surely no one would say that the jail is therefore a good place to go. Sixty years ago many ministers stoutly defended slavery, and many so-called good men and philanthropic men too were slave holders. Did that make slavery

a good thing? Do we not believe that in the many popular delusive isms of today there are many good people? Does that determine the character of the false Doctrine? Are not good men, even ministers, mistaken? Is a man good because he does a good thing? Then Cain was a good man because he sacrificed. Then Paul was a good man because he had a clean conscience when he persecuted the Christians and at the same time thought he was worshipping God. Did not Jesus say (John 16:2) "the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service"? What kind of people are those of whom Jesus speaks in Matt. 7:22, 23? Were they not such who in this world were enjoying the praises of men because of their Christian profession and activity? They did no more than the Egyptian sorcerers could do (Ex. 7:11, 12). They did no more than it is said the Antichrist will do when he is revealed (Matt. 24:24; II Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13). The Pharisees did everything that the Lodges do that can be called good; viz., they prayed, gave alms, and loved the brethren but Jesus said "except your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ye can in no wise enter the Kingdom of Heaven", Matt. 5:20.

WHY WE OPPOSE LODGES.

1. Because of their secrecy. We have no right to object to private matters, these are a necessity. There are private matters in the business and private matters in the family, these must needs be, and they are sacred. There are mysteries in creation, and in God's

Word and in man's experience and they are a necessity. But secrecy is (a) contrary to the very principles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who said "In secret have I said nothing", John 18:20. It is (b) contrary to the very purpose of Christianity which is to dispel darkness by being the Light of the world, Matt. 5:14-17; Phil. 2:15. Why the lodge flourishes more than the little band of true believers is expressed in John 3:19, "Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil." And our fellowship with them is strictly forbidden, Eph. 5:11-13, and (c) all the benefits of the lodge can be secured without secrecy. Yet when one enters the lodge this secrecy is the first obligation to be assumed. You are required to take a solemn oath to carefully conceal and never reveal the secrets of the lodge before you know what is coming. Only a fool would do such a thing. And such an act at once arouses suspicion. If any man would make such a request from his friends when they wanted to enter his home they would at once believe that there were things hidden or going on in that house that were illegitimate and dangerous to the public good and ought to be condemned and cleaned out.

Secrecy is the principle and method of the Prince of darkness. A public Devil is a fail ure, he would be shunned, so he works secretly in darkness and hides his snares and deceives the unwary. A real bad man is soon discovered for hesins openly, but a hypocrite is making a good show, and tares can only be distinguished from the wheat when it

bears fruit. Hence secrecy is of the evil one and all secrecy bears his mark.

2. We are opposed to lodges because of their oaths and penalties. It seems there are many good people, even officers of the law, who can not distinguish between an oath and vow or covenant. When a person unites with the visible church he is asked a number of questions which embody God's plan of salvation and the candidate accepts them by an affirmation. It is a mutual agreement between God and the newly converted soul. It is a covenant and is binding to both parties. But an oath is a religious act; for that reason it says "solemnly swear", but it has become commonplace and degenerated and profane. The person holds up his hand or kisses his Bible which means that he calls God to witness, and swears by him whether He agrees to it or not, and asks God to judge him by the truth in his book and condemn him if he is false to his oath. In the Old Testament it was customary to bind a promise with an oath. But oaths are not of Divine origin, but were granted because of the hardness of their hearts, beside all the oaths in the Old Testament were in God's will and this is not the case in modern times. Hence oaths are forbidden, Matt. 5:33-37; James 5:12. Only an affirmation is permissible, all else is of evil. Oaths create a false standard for they teach by inference that there are times when a man must tell the truth and there are times when a man may lie. Oaths are an insult to a Christian. Think of asking a man who always tells the truth, as a Christian will, to

take an oath so he might be sure to tell the truth. And the person who is not a child of God is likely to lie even under oath, so the oath is not only forbidden but unnecessary, and is generally used for base purposes as the forty men who bound themselves together to kill Paul, and corruptions of the present day are all oath bound. And the oath has even killed John the Baptist and freed many a criminal at the court.

The penalties of the lodge are terrible, even requiring the members to break the sixth Commandment upon a fellow-member who has disregarded his oath. Do they carry them out? They are in duty bound to do it. There are enough cases on record, most prominent among them is the execution of Captain William Morgan by drowning in the Niagara River because he exposed Free Masonry. This happened three-quarters of a century ago and so disgusted the Free Masons at that time who had their eyes opened that of the 50,000 members in this country it was reported that all but 5,000 left the lodge and Masonry was nearly wiped out of existence. The Masonic conscience is not so sensitive now for instead of decreasing, as they might have reasons to, they are on the increase.

3. We are opposed to lodges because of their initiations. These are in most cases terrifying, humiliating and cruel, resembling more the senseless inventions of ignorant children than the product of the minds of intelligent men, I Cor. 13:11. The candidate for Masonry is stripped except shirt and pants, and with his left arm and leg bare, is

blindfolded and led into the lodge room by a rope around his neck like a calf to the slaughter. The Knight of Pythias is compelled to jump barefooted on a plank of rubber spikes; the Woodman is branded or buzzed, and a hundred other devices are invented to unman a man; of course Ministers and Dignitaries are generally excused and are made members at sight. A neighbor of mine told me if his two boys would do anything like the performance he had to subject to, he would cowhide them. Strong men often faint, some are crippled for life and some even killed by these cruel initiations which are supposed to make a very wholesome and lasting impression upon the candidate while at the same time it provides sport for the rest of the lodge members. The Mason is taught that by this process he is born again and has now come from darkness into the light. The result of these sacrilegious ceremonies is injurious to the soul, for evangelists say that not 1 Mason in 1000 are ever converted and Knight Templars hardly ever. How can a Christian whose body is the temple of the Holy Ghost submit to such a humiliation of the dwelling place of God, I Cor. 6:19, 20.

4. The titles are unbiblical and blasphemous. When we read of the Most Noble Grand Royal High Priest, and the various degrees of Masters among them, we must think of the old Pharisees upon whom Christ pronounces his woes in Matt. 23:7-11. They assume titles which no one is entitled to but the Son of God.

5. In the lodge you are unequally yoked

together with unbelievers, II Cor. 6:14. The Atheist, the Jew, the Mohammedan, the Buddhist, the Skeptic, the immoral man are all your brothers in the lodge. Think of a follower of Jesus Christ and a confirmed infidel and blasphemer of His name yoked together as brethren. How can two walk together except they be agreed, Amos 3:3. But many say all men are brothers. Many Preachers and Religious writers are constantly talking about the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. This is decidedly unbiblical. The Bible teaches that there are two family lines in this world: the children of the Kingdom and the children of the wicked one, Matt. 13:38. Jesus calls the leaders of his enemies children of the Devil, John 8:44. He calls Judas a devil, John 6:69, and Paul calls Elymas the Sorcerer a child of the Devil, and the Scribes and Pharisees were called serpents and generation of vipers, Matt. 23:33. So are strictly speaking all who reject Christ. Are these your brethren, Christian? No, they only are my and your brethren who by a transforming faith in Jesus Christ have become children of God. This is the doctrine of the lodge but not the doctrine of the Word of God.

6. Their professed charity is unbiblical. While in some cases they contribute toward needy causes outside the lodge, it is the exception rather than the rule, they receive only such into their fellowship who are good risks, the disabled and needy are excluded. They help only those who are in good standing in the lodge and the man who was too

poor to keep up his dues must see to himself when misfortune befalls him. In a certain town in Pennsylvania a poor man lagged behind with his dues and when he broke his leg the church people helped him out but the lodge had not a cent for him, while his well-to-do neighbor, who could keep up his dues, drew his benefits when he was unable to work a few weeks on account of a slight accident. These dues are not paid out of love or a feeling of brotherly love but for the purpose of remaining in good standing, for the love of self; this brotherly love is hypocrisy. It is like fruit tied to the tree instead of growing out of it and if it were real brotherly love it would not meet the requirements of the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5:46-48.

7. Their moral standard is wrong. They promise not to defraud a brother or insult the female members of his family. Thus they teach that their members could do so to any one else.

If we would ask our members to abstain from cheating their Mennonite brethren, would that not mean that they might cheat any one else if they choose to do so?

8. But most objectionable of all is their religious feature. If the lodges would be purely secular or a business association there would not be so much to criticize, but the claims which the lodge makes on religion, is the greater abomination. They say, "No one can join unless he believes in God." There is no merit in that, the Jews, Mohammedans and Buddhists believe in God. They can be members without interfering with

their religion, even the Devil believes in God: he can join without offense to his religion. And all these deny Christ, and this is why the lodge excludes Christ so as not to offend those who deny him. And those who deny him dishonor God, for the Father is only honored in the Son, John 5: 23. Lodge rooms are provided with an altar. The altar stands for worship and sacrifice. The store keeper has no altar in his place of business, but the church has an altar. Why should the lodge have one? because it is a religion. The lodge has a creed. It teaches a salvation of works without repentance, faith or shedding of blood, it is like the sacrifice of Cain, and is an abomination to God. The lodge has the Bible in America, but not as God's word, but only as a symbol of the Truth. In Turkey they have the Koran, in China the book of Confucianism. They have Chaplains, who read from the Bible, and pray but intentionally omit Christ's name in both, or else they do contrary to the rules of the older and model lodges. These Chaplains or Priests may be men of low character. They read the burial service at the grave of a dead brother and give him title to the Grand lodge above. What kind of religion is this lodge religion? It is the counterfeit of Christianity, having just enough metal to deceive people. Many say the lodge is all we need; it is as good as the church. So said Jeroboam, I King 12: 26-31, when he erected idols at Dan and Bethel, to prevent his people from going to Jerusalem to worship the true God. "These are your gods" they are just as good. Impostors de-

ceive only men, they could not fool rats, they are too wise. These are signs of the Anti-christ, although he is the Anti-christ he will still claim to be the Christ To succeed in these days everything puts on the cloak of religion.

This religion is not a harmless counterfeit but it is antagonistic to the home, and justice and the church and the cause of Christ. It takes men away from their families in the evening, the only time they can spend with them. It is one of the chief causes of the absence of men in many churches and has sapped the very life out of the Church. Ministers confess that they joined the lodge to get influence over the men in it and instead of getting influence they lost all the influence they had by joining them. When men become genuinely converted and filled with the Holy Spirit they generally drop out of that kind of association and there is no remedy so effective against the lodge as a deep spiritual experience. "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," II Cor. 6:17, 18.